

House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

For immediate release: Dec. 19, 2005

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Multiple Democratic Priorities Included in FY06 Defense Authorization Bill

WASHINGTON D.C.— Today the House finally passed the FY06 Defense Authorization bill conference report. Many important Democratic priorities were included in the final product. Highlights are below.

Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)

Includes legislation bringing the Uniform Code of Military Justice into line with other federal laws regarding sexual assault and add the offense of “stalking” to the UCMJ.

"I'm particularly pleased that the final conference agreement includes two important revisions to the Uniform Code of Military Justice," said **Rep. Loretta Sanchez (CA)**. "The first revision would update Article 120 of the UCMJ – making it a modern, complete sexual assault statute that protects victims, empowers commanders and prosecutors, and improves good order and discipline of the armed forces."

"The agreement also includes an anti-stalking provision which would raise awareness, strengthen law enforcement, and underscore the criminality of this conduct to all members of the military community," **Sanchez** concluded.

Mental Health Task Force

Establishes a new task force to review DoD policy for early identification and treatment of mental health problems, particularly those resulting from combat.

“"Early identification and adequate screening is critical for treating post-traumatic stress disorder, and I'm pleased that the Conference Report included this proposal as part of their Mental Health Task Force. It is imperative that we treat the mental, not just physical, wounds of our soldiers when they return home from combat," **Rep. Martin Meehan (MA)** said. "The creation of the Mental Health Task Force sends a strong signal that looking out for the mental health of our soldiers is a top priority."

Family Support Centers

Adds \$20 million to the Army Reserve and National Guard family support centers for programs designed to help Reserve and Guard families cope with the deployment of a loved one.

“Family Support Centers throughout the nation provide a vital array of information, services, and support for our men and women in uniform and their families,” said **Rep. Susan Davis (CA)**. “These centers offer one stop shopping for a lot of their needs, such as relocation assistance, housing, getting to know a new location, and school enrollment information. They are a critical component of helping military families to navigate the sometimes difficult aspects of military life. I am pleased that we were able to include this funding in the Defense Authorization bill for 2006.”

Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI)

Authorizes DoD to cover the monthly Servicemembers Group life Insurance premium for all individuals serving in a combat zone, up to \$150,000. It also gives the Secretary the ability to increase that coverage up to \$400,000.

“One way to honor the sacrifice of our men and women in uniform is to ensure that their families receive full payment on their life insurance, should that be necessary. I wanted to provide the full \$400,000 of life insurance premiums to anyone in Iraq or Afghanistan,” said **Rep. John Spratt (SC)**, “but guaranteeing the first \$150,000 is a good start. No service member should go into combat without knowing his or her family will be provided for if something happens.”

TRICARE for Reservists

Creates three categories of beneficiaries in TRICARE Reserve Select; a category for those who deploy for a contingency operation and are entitled to participate at a cost share of 28/72, a new category for those who are unemployed or are not offered employer sponsored health care and are now eligible at a cost share of 50/50, and another new category for all others who are new eligible to participate in TRICARE Standard at a cost share of 15/85.

“I am pleased that Congress has taken the first step toward taking care of our National Guard and Reserve,” commented **Rep. Gene Taylor (MS)**. “Next year, I hope we can do better and offer full Tricare coverage for the men and women who are bearing a proportionally greater burden of the work we are doing in Iraq.”

Concurrent Receipt for Unemployable Veterans

Provides for full concurrent receipt to unemployable veterans starting on October 1, 2009.

“While many disabled veterans go on to enjoy productive lives, some are unable to because of the severity of their wounds,” **Rep. G.K. Butterfield (NC)** said. “We have a responsibility to support the fighting men and women who put their lives on the line to protect our way of life.”

“It was a long-standing injustice for many veterans,” **Butterfield** explained. “This should help bring the issue to a close in a more timely manner.”

A-76 Public-Private Competition

The bill provides additional protections for government civilian workers in public-private competition, such as requiring formal processes before work involving ten or more employees can be outsourced, eliminating loopholes in the existing regulations and allowing the government to consider things besides cost in government bids.

"The committee also took significant steps to prevent the Department of Defense from contracting out existing government work without first assessing whether cost savings would occur. We need to make sure that public-private competitions are conducted fairly to guarantee that our tax dollars are being used as effectively as possible," said **Rep. Jim Langevin (RI)**.

Kinetic Energy Interceptor (KEI)

Cuts \$50 million from the Kinetic Energy Interceptor (KEI) and requires a cost-benefit comparison of both boost-phase missile defense systems, KEI and the Airborne Laser (ABL).

“The Kinetic Energy Interceptor is one of the most technologically challenging projects ever undertaken. Earlier this year, the Missile Defense Agency declared that the Kinetic Energy Interceptor was its secondary boost phase option, but its budget never reflected this change,” noted **Rep. John Spratt (SC)**. “The \$50 million cut in this year’s bill sends an important message that we should walk before we run, so we can make sure that the American taxpayers are spending their money on a program that works.”

Ballistic Missile Defense

Sets aside \$100 million within the authorized missile defense budget, to improve testing of the Ground Based Defense system as recommended by independent review teams.

“I am pleased that this bill includes a provision for missile defense adopted by the conferees that applies a more rigorous testing approach to the systems being developed by the Missile Defense Agency,” said **Rep. Silvestre Reyes (TX)**. “Other weapons programs are subject to independent testing and oversight. Our weapons systems should not be an exception.”

“Our nation is best served -- both in terms of fiscal responsibility and homeland security -- when we require that, before it is fielded, a major weapon system like ballistic missile defense must first pass operational tests and evaluations designed by independent testers, not that weapon system's own program office,” concluded **Reyes**.

Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP)

All funding was removed from the Department of Energy for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator. However, the Air Force was provided funding for a conventional penetrator study.

“I’m pleased that the FY 2006 Defense Authorization bill will not allow the creation of new nuclear weapons, but instead provides our military with resources to destroy hard and deeply buried targets with conventional weapons. I continue to oppose the RNEP or development of any new dangerous and unpredictable nuclear weapons that would gravely endanger American troops on the ground, if used,” said **Rep. Ellen Tauscher (CA)**.

Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW)

Allows for the maintenance of existing nuclear stockpiles without the need to develop and test new weapons.

“We have included in the conference agreement some important objectives for the Reliable Replacement Warhead program,” noted **Rep. John Spratt (SC)**. “These are not just bounds on the program; they are an essential statement of policy for the United States that we are serious about reducing the threat of nuclear weapons in the future.”

“The RRW program is simply a concept at this stage, and I intend to keep a close eye on its study,” said **Rep. Ellen Tauscher (CA)**. “I am relieved that my colleagues and I have set strict parameters on the RRW study, to ensure that it will focus on reducing our nuclear arsenal and finding avenues to keep our weapons secure without testing.”

Future Submarine Technologies

Requires DoD to develop more advanced, cost effective submarine technologies for inclusion on Virginia-class submarines or new designs.

"I am pleased that the conference report includes language that will encourage the implementation of cutting-edge submarine technologies in a cost-effective manner," said **Rep. Jim Langevin (RI)**. "Such a program will be vital to ensuring that our nation has the most advanced undersea warfare capabilities to address emerging threats. I am hopeful that this initiative will ultimately lead the Navy to call for a new submarine design, either as a new class of ships or through modifications to the existing VIRGINIA-class."

Future Combat Systems (FCS)

Requires the Secretary of Defense to review the program and certify that the FCS will meet future warfighting requirements. The Secretary must also certify that FCS vehicles will be transportable and at least as survivable as armored vehicles currently in the field. Funding for the program was cut by \$100 million.

"The Army's Future Combat System program could cost \$160 billion or more in the years ahead," charged **Rep. Neil Abercrombie (HI)**. "The enhanced oversight measures that the conference report puts in place are necessary for Congress to fully oversee and monitor this enormously costly program."

LHA(R) Amphibious Ship

Added \$50 million and authorized the start of advanced construction.

"For the sake of our US Marines, it was essential that Congress authorize funds to begin construction on the LHA-R. Rapid worldwide deployment depends on an improved class of amphibious ship, and the LHA-R fulfills that requirement," stated **Rep. Gene Taylor (MS)**.

VXX Presidential Helicopter Program

Requires the Presidential Helicopter Program (VXX) to be adequately tested before entering production in FY08.

"Cutting corners with the testing of new helicopters to transport the President is out of the question," said **Rep. Neil Abercrombie (HI)**. "By requiring a new testing schedule, the conference report addresses my concern that the development plan for the new Presidential helicopter must be done properly and meet all normal DOD safety testing procedures."

Shipyards

Requires DoD to maintain two working shipyards for destroyer production, rather than follow through with an earlier proposal to cut down to one.

“The only sensible option for the long-term security of our Nation is to maintain two shipyards. Hurricane Katrina reinforced the dangers of moving to a single-source shipbuilding strategy,” commented **Rep. Gene Taylor (MS)**. “I am pleased that the House realized the necessity of adopting Senate language to move forward with a joint effort to build our next class of destroyer.

Contractors

Requires DoD to expand the guidance on overseas contractors to now include security contractors, with particular focus on their qualifications and use of weapons.

“So much of the work done by our military today is done by contractors, but these contractors often operate with insufficient oversight and direction. I hope that the requirements in our bill will make sure that contractors do not overstep their bounds and help assure the American people that we are getting the best value for our contractor dollar,” stated **Rep. John Spratt (SC)**.

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